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House Bill 282 – Adult Protective Services - Modifications
House Judiciary Committee
February 5, 2026
FAVORABLE

Chair Bartlett, Vice Chair Davis, and distinguished members of the House Judiciary Committee. I am Sara Westrick, Advocacy Director for AARP Maryland. AARP Maryland supports House Bill 282, which seeks to support Adult Protective Services within our state.

As a non-profit, non-partisan organization dedicated to advocating for individuals age 50 and older, AARP is committed to ensuring that vulnerable adults are protected from abuse, neglect, and exploitation. HB 282 represents a critical improvement in ensuring that Maryland's Adult Protective Services system is equipped to safeguard these individuals.

AARP Maryland's Position

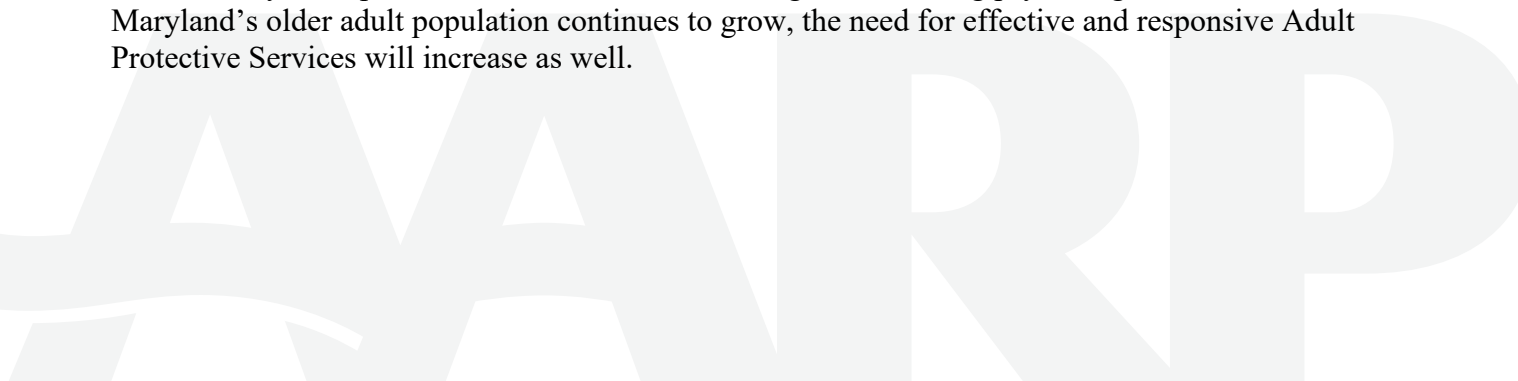
We support HB 282 because it includes the addition of "psychological harm" as a form of abuse, acknowledging the severe impact of emotional distress on vulnerable adults, ensuring that non-physical forms of abuse are recognized and addressed.

In addition, by defining "relationship of trust," the bill emphasizes the responsibility of caregivers, relatives, and others in close relationships to protect vulnerable adults, holding them accountable for any abuse, neglect, or exploitation. This also helps clarify the role of Adult Protective Services within the first-responder continuum; the bill encourages cooperation among local departments, law enforcement, aging services, and other agencies, fostering a multidisciplinary approach to investigations and care planning.

Additionally, the bill helps ensure that Maryland's Adult Protective Services remains in compliance with federal regulations, enhancing its credibility and effectiveness.

Why This Legislation Matters

Elder abuse is a serious and growing problem. According to the National Center on Elder Abuse, one in ten older adults experiences some form of abuse, yet it remains underreported. Many victims are isolated and unable to advocate for themselves. HB 282 further strengthens the state's ability to respond to all forms of abuse and neglect, including psychological harm. As Maryland's older adult population continues to grow, the need for effective and responsive Adult Protective Services will increase as well.



Conclusion

AARP Maryland believes that HB 282 is a critical step toward enhancing the safety and security of Maryland's most vulnerable residents. We urge the committee to support this important legislation and work to ensure that Adult Protective Services has the tools and resources it needs to protect older adults from harm.

If you have any questions, please contact Sara Westrick at swestrick@aarp.org or by calling 410-310-0374.